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GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT ACCEPTS BUILDOUT PLAN FOR FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK

Montpelier, Vt. — Governor Phil Scott today announced he has decided to opt-in to the federal FirstNet plan to deliver a wireless broadband network to the state’s public safety community. The Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network is expected to provide Vermont’s first responders with access to a reliable, secure and technologically robust cellular network that is now under development.

“It is important that Vermont’s first responders have the best service and access to an interoperable network that is expected to advance and adapt with new technology through the next 25 years,” said Gov. Scott. “Vermont faced the choice of building its own network or using the federal solution. After thoroughly considering the technological, financial and operational aspects of both options, I believe the federal plan will more quickly and sustainably provide our public safety community with the network it needs to continue its valuable service to Vermont.”

Gov. Scott’s decision follows the recommendation he received earlier this month from Vermont’s Public Safety Broadband Network Commission (PSBC), which recommended Vermont opt-in to the federal plan. The commission considered the federal plan and a proposal from an alternative vendor submitted through an RFP process. In its recommendation, the PSBC focused on service, coverage and risks of both options.

In 2012, Congress passed legislation creating FirstNet as an independent authority within the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). FirstNet was to build the nationwide network and eventually become financially self-sufficient by selecting a commercial partner. Following a 15-month national RFP process to secure a partner, AT&T was announced as the winning bidder.

“Today’s opt-in decision means that FirstNet/AT&T can begin work immediately in Vermont,” said PSBC Chair Terry LaValley. “Due to the all-bands approach by AT&T, first responders will have immediate access to all bandwidth owned and operated by AT&T in Vermont, including priority calling. AT&T will also use funds allocated to FirstNet to increase the number of cell sites in Vermont within the next five years—many in areas where first responders currently lack good coverage.”

Vermont becomes the 34th state or territory in the nation to accept the federal FirstNet plan and the 8th state to do so after going through a competitive process for alternatives. FirstNet delivered official notices to all state governors on September 29 that final plans for build-out in each state and territory were now in place.

Vermont has been studying the development of the network for more than a year, including more than 100 meetings with first responders and other stakeholders. The PSBC is a governor-appointed commission charged with evaluating the best option for build-out in Vermont. The PSBC reviewed both a

draft and final plan for the State of Vermont and worked with FirstNet/AT&T for coverage improvements.

Televate, a technical consultant hired by the PSBC to evaluate the plan, recommended that Vermont opt-in. An independent review by the Coeur Business Group, which was contracted by the Agency of Digital Services to analyze the opt-in/opt-out options, also recommended opt-in. An evaluation of the financial risks conducted by the State Treasurer's Office expressed significant concerns regarding the financial consequences to the state and its future borrowing capacity in the event of an election to opt-out.

FirstNet and AT&T designed Vermont's network solution with direct input from the state's public safety community. FirstNet has been meeting with Vermont's officials and public safety personnel for several years to address their unique communication needs. These include:

- Expanding rural coverage to include the Northeast Kingdom;
- Making available a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) solution to support Vermont's large contingent of volunteer responders; and
- Incorporating a deployment plan that leverages state and municipal infrastructure.

"Governor Scott's decision is a win-win-win for the state, its public safety community, and everyone who lives, works or visits in Vermont," said FirstNet Board Member and former Governor of Vermont, Jim Douglas. "The FirstNet Network will modernize our emergency communications infrastructure, help create jobs in the Green Mountain State and ensure that our first responders have the best tools and technologies to keep our communities safe and secure."

More information on the FirstNet project in Vermont is available on the PSBC website at www.PSBC.Vermont.gov.